

TEXAS STATE TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE AT BRECKENRIDGE

## HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding educational institution in the 17th District of Texas. The Texas State Technical College campus in Breckenridge, Texas, provides top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world.

On Tuesday, November 9, 1999, the campus celebrated its tenth anniversary. I offered a flag flown over the Capitol to commemorate this occasion and to show our dedication to the education to both past and future generations.

I would like to submit for the RECORD a copy of a resolution that I offered at this very special event.

It is my hope that this Nation and my home State of Texas will continue to honor institutions like Texas State Technical College that have dedicated themselves to providing the best possible education to its students.

## RESOLUTION

Whereas, On November 9, 1999, the Breckenridge Campus of Texas State Technical College will celebrate its tenth anniversary; and

Whereas, The Breckenridge campus serves as a vital component of the Texas State Technical College System, welcoming students from every walk of life; and

Whereas, T.S.T.C. has made an ongoing commitment to the future by providing a top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world; and

Whereas, Today's celebration honors not only the service by the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. during the last ten years, but its commitment to the future; and

Whereas, I present this flag flown over our nation's capitol on October 4, 1999, as symbol of our dedication to those past and future generations who have benefitted by the instruction and opportunities made available to them at the Breckenridge campus, be it

*Resolved*, That I, Charles W. Stenholm, as Congressman for the 17th District of Texas, do officially recognize and extend my best wishes on the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. and that an official copy of this resolution be presented to T.S.T.C. as an expression of my high regards for their efforts.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND HUMAN  
RIGHTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

## HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the House schedule did not permit consideration of my resolution, H. Con. Res. 204, which has been co-sponsored by Representative HOYER, Representative FORBES and Representative MCKINNEY. The resolution voices concern about serious violations of human rights and fundamental free-

doms in most states of Central Asia, in particular, substantial noncompliance with OSCE commitments on democratization and the holding of free and fair elections.

Among the countries of the former Soviet Union, only in Ukraine and Moldova have sitting presidents lost an election and peacefully left office. We will yet see what happens in Russia, where President Yeltsin has launched another war in Chechnya. It may be too much, given the historical differences between our respective societies, to hope the post-Soviet states could find among their political leaders a George Washington, who could have been king but chose not to be, and who chose to leave office after two terms. But it is not too much to hope that other post-Soviet leaders might emulate Ukraine's former President Leonid Kravchuk or Moldova's former President Mircea Snegur, not to mention Lithuania's Algirdas Brazauskas, who all allowed a peaceful transfer of power.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Central Asian leaders give every indication of intending to remain in office for life. Their desire for unlimited and permanent power means that they cannot implement all OSCE commitments on democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as doing so would create a level playing field for challengers and allow the media to shine the light on presidential misdeeds and high-level corruption. The result has been an entire region in the OSCE space where fundamental OSCE freedoms are ignored while leaders entrench themselves and their families in power and wealth.

To give credit where it is due, the situation is least bad in Kyrgyzstan. President Akaev, a physicist, is the only Central Asian leader who was not previously the head of his republic's Communist Party. One can actually meet members of parliament who strongly criticize President Akaev and the legislature itself is not a rubber stamp body. Moreover, print media—though under serious pressure from the executive branch—exhibit diversity of views and opposition parties function. Still, in 1995, two contenders in the presidential election were disqualified before the vote. Parliamentary and presidential elections are approaching in 2000. Kyrgyzstan's OSCE partners will be watching carefully to see whether they are free and fair.

Until the mid-1990s, Kazakhstan seemed a relatively reformist country, where various political parties could function and the media enjoyed some freedom. But President Nazarbaev dissolved two parliaments and singlemindedly sought to accumulate sole power. In the last few years, the regime has become ever more authoritarian. President Nazarbaev has concentrated all power in his hands, subordinating to himself all other branches and institutions of government. A constitutional amendment passed in October 1999 conveniently removed the age limit of 65 to be president. The OSCE judged last January's presidential elections, from which a leading opposition contender was barred as far short of OSCE standards. Last month's parliamentary election, according to the OSCE, was "severely marred by widespread, pervasive and illegal interference by executive authorities in the electoral process." In response, President Nazarbaev has attacked the OSCE, comparing it to the Soviet

Communist Party's Politburo for trying to "tell Kazakhstan what to do."

Tajikistan has suffered the saddest fate of all the Central Asian countries; a civil war that killed scores of thousands. In 1997, the warring sides finally ceased hostilities and reached agreement about power-sharing, which permitted a bit of hopefulness about prospects for normal development and democratization. It seems, however, that the accord will not ensure stability. Tajikistan's Central Election Commission refused to register two opposition candidates for the November 6 presidential election. The sole alternative candidate registered has refused to accept the results of the election, which, according to official figures, current President Emomaly Rakhmonov won with 97 percent of the vote, in a 98 percent turnout. Those numbers, Mr. Speaker, say it all. The OSCE properly declined to send observers.

Benighted Turkmenistan practically begs description. This country, which has been blessed with large quantities of natural gas, has a political system that combines the worst traits of Soviet communism with a personality cult seen today in countries like Iraq or North Korea. No dissidence of any kind is permitted and the population enjoys no human rights. While his impoverished people barely manage to get by, President Niyazov builds garish presidential palaces and monuments to himself. The only registered political party in Turkmenistan is the Democratic Party—headed by President Niyazov. In late October he said the people of his country would not be ready for the stresses and choices of a democratic society until 2010, adding that independent media are "disruptive." On December 12, Turkmenistan is holding parliamentary "elections," which the OSCE will not bother to observe.

Finally, we come to Uzbekistan. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, held hearings on democratization and human rights in Uzbekistan on October 18. Despite the best efforts of Uzbekistan's Ambassador Safaev to convince us that democratization is proceeding apace in his country, the testimony of all the other witnesses confirmed the widely held view that after Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan is the most repressive country in Central Asia. No opposition political activity is allowed and media present only the government's point of view. Christian denominations have faced official harassment. Since 1997, a massive government campaign has been underway against independent Muslim believers. In February of this year, explosions rocked Tashkent, which the government described as an assassination attempt by Islamic radicals allied with an exiled opposition leader.

Apart from elections, a key indicator of progress towards democratization is the state of media freedom. On October 25–27, an International Conference on Mass Media in Central Asia took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Not surprisingly, Turkmenistan did not allow anyone to attend. The other participants adopted a declaration noting that democratization has slowed in almost all Central Asian states, while authoritarian regimes have grown stronger, limiting the scope for genuine media freedom as governments influence the media through economic means.